

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management**

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**Finding of No Significant Impact**

**South Steptoe Travel Management Plan (DOI-BLM-NV-  
L020-2011-0015-EA)**

**February 10, 2012**

**PREPARING OFFICE**

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# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT — ELY DISTRICT OFFICE

## Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-L020-2011-0015-EA) that analyzed the effects of a travel management plan to be conducted within the South Steptoe Travel Management Area (TMA). The EA considered a range of development alternatives, including the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative. The EA is tiered to, and incorporates by reference, the *Ely Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement* (RMP/FEIS), released in November 2007 (BLM 2007).

I have reviewed the EA for the South Steptoe Travel Management Plan (DOI-BLM-NV-L020-2011-0015-EA), dated February 1, 2012. After consideration of the environmental effects as described in the EA, I have determined that Alternative F: Proposed Action (Selected Alternative), with the project design features, will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

I have also considered the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

## Context:

Comprehensive travel management planning has become a priority for federal land management agencies over the past decade. Whereas many public lands have traditionally been open to cross country traffic without restriction, new pressures have necessitated a national level change from passive to active transportation management.

The South Steptoe Travel Management Plan (TMP) is located within the South Steptoe Valley TMA, which is primarily south of Ely, Nevada. There are 1,554 existing routes totaling approximately 928 miles. The routes are used primarily by residents and visitors of Ely for access to private property and recreational uses including hunting access, sightseeing, and off-highway vehicles (OHVs).

In the early 1980s, responding to Presidential Executive Orders 11644 and 11989, the BLM began designating all public lands as "open," "closed," and "limited" for Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) usage. More recently, the Ely District Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP) requires staff to "Update the Ely District Transportation Plan through subsequent implementation-level plans completed primarily along watershed boundaries." (TM-4)

## Intensity:

### 1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The project will be beneficial to the environment overall by designating specific routes for use that will minimize potential impacts to vegetation, wildlife, and other natural resources. By removing 234 miles of routes throughout the travel management area, a greater number and acreage of security areas for big game will be protected from the activity of motorized travel, thus improving the overall quality of the habitat. However, the reduced amount of mileage remaining as a result of the proposed road closures will result in a higher concentration of motorized activity on the routes designated as "open."

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

There are no concerns for public health or safety as a result of this action. Dust is expected to continue to occur similar to current levels, but is not expected to exceed Nevada and National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Minimizing conflicts between transportation network users may result in increased public health and safety.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

The project area encompasses the Ward Charcoal Ovens, a historically significant site managed by the State of Nevada. Designations of routes surrounding the Ward Charcoal Ovens will neither limit primary access to the site nor increase access. No other unique areas will be affected by the action.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be controversial.

A 60-day comment period and four public meetings were held for the Preliminary EA. Only 10 people attended the public meetings and 12 parties provided written comments regarding the proposal. Of the existing 928 miles of routes, 642 miles, or approximately 69%, will be designated as either "open" or "limited" under the proposed action. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The effects of the proposed action identified in the EA are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks. Travel Management techniques such as those described in the EA are not new or unique, and have been successfully used by the Bureau of Land Management in many previous travel plans.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The actions associated with this project, and as identified in the EA, do not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects and do not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. While post treatment monitoring data from this project might be used to determine appropriate actions in future similar projects, those projects will be subject to compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and an independent decision-making process.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

All resources have been considered for cumulative effects and any potential impacts have been documented in the EA. No significant impacts were identified. As standard procedure, future projects will be subject to their own cumulative impact analysis and reviewed on a site-specific case-by-case basis.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the NRHP or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The proposed action will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures or objects listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places, nor will it cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical places. As route closures occur, identified cultural and historic properties will be avoided according to the methods described in Appendix B *Travel Management Road Closure Monitoring Plan*.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the ESA of 1973.

No federally listed threatened or endangered species are known to occur within the project area.


10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The proposed action will not violate or threaten to violate any Federal, State or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action is consistent to the maximum extent possible with Federal, State and local policies and plans.

### **Finding of No Significant Impact**

I have determined that Alternative F: Proposed Action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

### **Signed:**



Mary D'Aversa  
Field Manager  
Schell Field Office



Date